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NEW TECHNIQUES IN NEUROPATHY AND EPIDEMIOLOGY

N. Zeytlenok
Cand Med Sci
Moscow

Many of the primary encephalitic and other infectious diseases of the nervous system are caused by virus. In the last 12 years, Soviet scientists have made great strides in solving this relationship. Progress in virological research has been made possible by contributions of virologists, neuropathologists, psychiatrists, as well as by parasitological and epidemiological institutions and clinics of infectious diseases.

New achievements in neuropathy were discussed at the Fourth Session of the Institute of Neurology, Academy of Medical Sciences USSR. Representatives of 37 Republic and Oblast centers attended. Among reports were those on tick-borne encephalitis, chorio-encephalitis (psychosensory neuro-infection), chorio-meningitis, hemorrhagic fever, and papers were presented on undetermined infections of nervous systems.

Prof M. P. Chumakov, Corresponding Member, Academy of Medical Sciences USSR, claims that in spite of various forms of tick-borne encephalitis there is one fact common to all cases: studies conducted by virologists and immunologists resulted in conclusion that all strains isolated from various cases belonged to one virus. This claim was supported by clinical, pathomorphological and experimental data.

Prof L. A. Zil'ber, Active Member, Academy of Medical Sciences USSR, disagreed with Prof Chumakov: Zil'ber supported the fact which clinicians have long contended, that there were various clinical forms of tick-borne encephalitis in the different regions of the USSR. However, Zil'ber's was not supported by representatives of neurological clinics located in the back country and where they have had excellent opportunity to observe tick-borne encephalitis under natural conditions.

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After considerable discussion and argument, the following conclusion was reached: that tick-borne encephalitis in man is of a single nosologic type and etiology. However, there is great variation in the nosologic boundary, along with vast differences in clinical characteristics due to living and working conditions, period during which the epidemic occurs, climatic factors, zooparasitic nature of the country surrounding the region where the epidemic has occurred, as well as changes in the macro- or micro-organisms brought about by outside factors.

A report by Prof L. A. Omorokov suggested that tanner's epilepsy was a syndrome of tick-borne encephalitis. Reports by A. F. Pecherkina-Sarapulova (sulphur therapy), and Prof A. V. Pehenichnov (sulphur prophylaxis), showed the value of the indicated therapy. Members agreed to continue to seek an effective preparation for controlling the disease in acute and latent stages. They also proposed to find improved methods for the etiological diagnosis of tick-borne encephalitis.

There was considerable discussion on chorio-encephalitis which appeared suddenly among school children. The course of this disease is in two periods: (1) when patients run high temperatures, and (2) which follows the first period after one to 4 weeks during which the patients show symptoms of psychosensory disruption which prevents them from distinguishing sounds, shapes and colors. There appears to be a complete loss of depth perception during this second period. The patients complain of headaches and indicate increased spinal fluid pressure although the composition of the fluid is normal. Course of the disease is intermittent and will come and go. Definite improvement is noted in patients after spinal taps. Although the disease is usually not fatal it is, nevertheless, serious.

Chorio-encephalitis has been studied for only about 18 months, but in that short time Soviet scientists have learned much about the disease. Reports by various scientists discussed the etiology, epidemiology and clinical course of the disease. The causative agent of chorio-encephalitis seems to be a filtrable virus.

It was concluded that this form of encephalitis is completely different from the known forms of encephalitis and meningitis, including the so-called Economo's encephalitis, and is a new type of disease.

Various ideas were submitted regarding pathogenesis of this disease. Chumakov's hypothesis, supported by clinicians and neuropathologists, is that patients afflicted undergo a degeneration of the vascular plexus in the cranial sinus (choroid plexus). This results in increased spinal fluid pressure. In some cases there is edema of the white matter of the brain and disruption of function of the psychosensory sphere.

Prof G. Ye. Sukhareva agrees that infection of the vascular plexus is a principal symptom in the genesis of this disease, but adds that this infection is secondary and is caused by the diffusion of the infection into the main trunk of the brain with a resulting disruption of the ischmeric functions of the higher vegetative centers.

Discussions on hemorrhagic fever were conducted with representatives of epidemiological, infectionist and microbiological societies present. It was stated that Soviet doctors were the first to describe this individual class of acute febrile virus infections which have been generally termed hemorrhagic fevers. Intensive research on the causes of this disease brought to light that the Omsk type of hemorrhagic fever is caused by a filtrable virus. Sources of this virus in nature were determined and an exact clinical picture of the course of the disease was described. Soviet scientists have also developed a vaccine for this disease.

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